

Tom Horne  
Superintendent

# N·E·W·S

---

## ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

---

Contact: Amy Rezzonico, Press Secretary (602)-542-5072  
Thursday, December 18, 2003

### **HORNE REPORTS GRADUATION RATE ABOVE NATIONAL AVERAGE** “Happy Surprise” for Arizonans

Phoenix (Thursday, December 18, 2003) – Tom Horne, Arizona State Schools’ Chief, today announced that the Arizona graduation rate exceeds the national average. This is surprisingly good news for Arizonans, used to unfavorable comparisons, which recent studies show to have been misleading.

Horne released the Arizona Department of Education 2002 graduation rate study. The study examines students that entered ninth grade in 1998–1999 school year and graduated from twelfth grade by the end of the 2002-2003. The most recent figures show that 76.4% received a high school diploma during this period, while nearly 73% accomplished this in a four-year period, a rate that is 5½% above the national average.

The most recent statistics show that on a national level an average of 67.3% of students graduate in four years according to the National Center for Educational Statistics.

Arizonans have been used to unfavorable reports of dropout studies. However, recent research shows these studies to have been misleading. “As an example, in prior studies, Arizona counted students who received GEDs as dropouts, whereas a number of other states did not. The comparisons were, therefore, misleading. The graduation rate that is the subject of the most recent study, by contrast, compares apples with apples, and shows Arizona doing better than the national average,” Horne stated.

Also advocating the use of the graduation rate, rather than the misleading dropout rate with inconsistent definitions, is the Center for the Future of Arizona which is leading a coalition on the issue that includes among others: Greater Phoenix Leadership Council, Greater Phoenix Economic Council, Arizona Business Education Coalition, Department of Education, and the Arizona Center for Public Policy.

Reports of the most recent studies by the Department of Education are available at [www.ade.az.gov](http://www.ade.az.gov).

###